

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-5 and 10 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 1 is amended. The above amendments introduce no new matter. Support for amended claim 1 can be found, for example, in Figs. 5 and 6. Claims 9 and 11 are canceled without prejudice to, or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Reconsideration of the rejections in view of the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

The Office Action, on page 2, rejects claims 1, 3, 4, and 5 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 6,203,136 to Takahashi et al. (hereinafter "Takahashi"). The Office Action, on page 4, rejects claims 9-11 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Takahashi in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,068,364 to Kusumi et al. (hereinafter "Kusumi"). The cancellation of claims 9 and 11 renders the rejection of claims 9 and 11 moot. The rejections of claims 1, 3-5 and 10 are respectfully traversed.

Independent claims 1 and 10 recite, among other features, the groove extending vertically and perpendicular to the bottom surface. The combination of Takahashi and Kusumi would not have suggested this feature.

The Office Action asserts that Takahashi discloses all of the features recited in claim 10 except for the groove extending vertically and perpendicular to the bottom surface. The Office Action thus relies on Kusumi for allegedly remedying this shortfall of Takahashi. Specifically, the Office Action asserts that Kusumi discloses a cap for a service station for ink-jet print heads where the vertical surface 48 extends vertically and perpendicular to top wall 40. The Office Action asserts that one of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to include this feature of Kusumi to provide an effective seal between the cavity defined by a cap and the ambient environment without any absorbent pad. For the reasons discussed below, the references themselves do not suggest the desirability to modify Takahashi, or to combine reference teachings in order result in the features recited in independent claims 1 and 10.

The disclosure of Takahashi already provides a cap that effectively seals the nozzle openings of an ink jet recording head. Applicant notes that cols. 1 and 2 of Takahashi discuss the problems associated with sealing caps of the prior art. Specifically, cols. 1 and 2 of Takahashi indicate that there has been a problem of reduction in the sealing performance of the prior art caps. Accordingly, Takahashi provides a cap 34 that provides improved sealing performance between the cap 34 and the nozzle plate P. For example, Takahashi discloses a draping 35 that is formed in the opening surface of the cap 34 so as to reduce the rigidity of the contacting surface, and a straight portion 35b that is interposed between adjacent corner portions 35a so that the straight portion 35b is shaped to be almost as large as curvature radius R so as to improve the sealing performance in the corner portion 35a and the straight portion 35b in the short sides (see, e.g., Fig. 7A and col. 5, lines 57-65).

Further, Takahashi, at col. 12, lines 16-32, also discusses the enhanced sealing achieved by the cap 34. For example, Takahashi discloses that cap comes into contact with the recording head so as to expand the contact regions gradually from its one corner, and the cap performs capping so as to be familiar with the recording head from its one corner, so that the cap can contact with the recording head tightly with the small pressure and nozzle openings can be surely sealed even if the recording head has a large aspect ratio. Importantly, it is clear from the disclosure of Takahashi that the cap 34 provides an effective seal between the cap and the nozzle plate P.

Thus, Kusumi's disclosure of a vertical surface 48 that extends vertically with respect to the top wall 40, without any disclosure that such a structure would be any more effective in sealing a nozzle plate than the structure of Takahashi (which already provides a cap that effectively seals the nozzle plate P), cannot be considered motivation to modify the structure of Takahashi as alleged by the Office Action.

Further, there is no suggestion that Takahashi and Kusumi could even be combined with any reasonable expectation of success. Takahashi and Kusumi decidedly disclose completely different structures that are provided for sealing nozzle openings. Modifying any structural feature of Takahashi as suggested by the Office Action would very likely destroy the sealing ability of Takahashi.

For at least these reasons, Takahashi and Kusumi are not combinable in the manner suggested, and any permissible combination would not have suggested all of the features positively recited in independent claims 1 and 10. Further, claims 3-5 also would not have been suggested by the combination of applied references for at least the respective dependence of these claims directly or indirectly on an allowable independent claim 1, as well as for the separately subject matter recited therein.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the §103(a) rejections of claims 1, 3-5 and 10 are respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance of claims 1, 3-5 and 10 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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